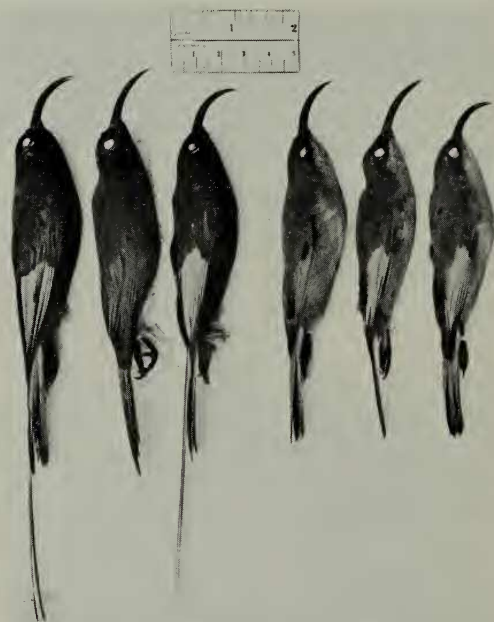


## A new Golden-winged Sunbird from Kenya

by MR. JOHN G. WILLIAMS

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On 25th June, 1955, during a brief visit to Mt. Uruguess at the southern end of the Mathews Range, Northern Frontier Province, Kenya Colony, I collected an adult female *Nectarinia reichenowi* which differed markedly from females of this species collected in other parts of Kenya and northern Tanganyika. It was a much smaller bird with a very strongly curved bill. Unfortunately I was unable to secure further specimens at the time of my visit, but in early October 1955 Mr. John Smart of the Kenya Forestry



Races of *Nectarinia reichenowi*: left to right, males, *N.r.reichenowi*, *N.r.shellyae*, *N.r.lathburyi*; females, *N.r.reichenowi*, *N.r.shellyae* and *N.r.lathburyi*.

Department kindly collected a further four similar specimens on Mt. Nyiro, immediately north of the Mathews Range. In addition to these five specimens Dr. H. Friedmann has kindly sent me on loan three Mt. Uruguess examples of this sunbird from the United States National Museum collection. Dr. Friedmann had already drawn attention to the small size of these specimens in his report on "Birds of Ethiopia and Kenya" (*Bull.* 153, pt. 2, U.S.Nat.Mus. 1937).

A comparison of this material with a large series of the nominate race collected throughout its range and with specimens of *N.r.shellyae*, kindly sent to me by Dr. A. Prigogine, left no doubt that the northern population

of the Golden-winged Sunbird inhabiting the Mathews Range and Mt. Nyiro represented a distinct new race.

I have pleasure in naming this new sunbird

*Nectarinia reichenowi lathburyi*

in honour of General Sir Gerald Lathbury, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.B.E., in recognition of his constant enthusiastic support of ornithological research in East Africa.

Holotype: Adult male in full breeding plumage, in United States National Museum collection, reg. no. 217741; locality, summit of Mt. Garguez (=Uruguess), Mathews Range, Northern Frontier Province, Kenya Colony; 0° 56' N. 37° 24' E.; altitude 7,100 feet; 27th August, 1911; collector, E. Heller, Rainey African Expedition, 1911.

Description of holotype: Differs from nominate *Nectarinia reichenowi* in its smaller size and more decurved bill. Metallic plumage, especially of breast, more highly shot with crimson than in any specimen of nominate *reichenowi* examined (40 specimens) with the exception of a single adult male from Nanyuki, Mt. Kenya, which matches the holotype in this respect.

Soft parts: Iris dark brown; bill and feet black.

Measurements of holotype: Wing 76; exposed culmen 26; tail 61; central rectrices 115 mm.

Allotype: Adult female, in United States National Museum collection, reg. no. 217740; locality, summit of Mt. Garguez (= Uruguess), Mathews Range, Northern Frontier Province, Kenya Colony; 0° 56' N. 37° 24' E.; altitude 7,100 feet; 25th August, 1911; collector E. Heller, Rainey African Expedition, 1911.

Description of allotype: Differs from nominate *Nectarinia reichenowi* in its smaller size and more decurved bill; upper parts slightly darker and underparts tinged deeper yellow than in nominate race.

Soft parts: Iris dark brown; bill and feet black.

Measurements of allotype: Wing 67; exposed culmen 24; tail 51 mm.

In addition to the characters enumerated in the descriptions of the holotype and allotype, males of *N.r.lathburyi* in full eclipse plumage differ from eclipse males of *N.r.reichenowi* (material of *N.r.shellyae* in this plumage not available) in being darker, dead black against blackish-brown, on the head and underparts. Only recently collected eclipse males of nominate *reichenowi* were used in this comparison.

*Habits:* Lathbury's Golden-winged Sunbird appears to be confined to the Mathews Range and Mt. Nyiro, Northern Frontier Province, Kenya Colony. During various expeditions to other mountains in the Northern Frontier Province I found no trace of this sunbird on either Mt. Marsabit or Mt. Kulal, although *Cinnyris mediocris*, which occurs alongside *N.r.lathburyi* on Mt. Nyiro, is not uncommon on Mt. Kulal.

The single female I collected on Mt. Uruguess was shot while feeding from flowers of *Loranthus* sp., an orange-flowered parasitic plant growing on an isolated tree in a mountain valley. On Mt. Nyiro Mr. John Smart and Mr. William Hale both inform me that the species is common in the larger open glades of the forest, where it feeds almost exclusively among the orange blossoms of a *Leonotis* shrub and a yellow-flowered *Crotolaria* bush which grows abundantly around the forest margin. Birds observed by Mr. Hale (who unfortunately collected no specimens) and those secured

by Mr. Smart had their heads heavily dusted with the bright orange pollen of these flowers.

My colleague, Mr. R. Carcasson, has kindly examined in detail the stomachs' contents of the five recently collected specimens and reports as follows:

*Adult male, Mt. Nyiro:* Many fragments Hymenoptera (flying ants); Jassidae (1 jassid); Coleoptera (various fragments, including *Lampyridae*); Lepidoptera (scales from wing); fragments of *Blattidae* and ? Diptera.

*Adult male, Mt. Nyiro:* Fragments of Coleoptera (*Chrysomelidae* and *Melolonthidae*); Ephemerid (1 mayfly); Diptera (*Ortalidae*); and 1 spider.

*Adult male, Mt. Nyiro:* Fragments of Diptera (including *Culicidae*, *Syrphidae* and *Muscidae*); Coleoptera; Orthoptera (*Acrididae* and *Blattidae* fragments); Lepidoptera (wing scales) and a few spiders' legs.

*Adult female, Mt. Nyiro:* Mainly fragments of Diptera (*Ortalidae*) and some Coleoptera (including *Chrysomelidae*).

*Adult female, Mt. Urugess:* Fragments of several spiders and some Coleoptera (mainly *Chrysomelidae*). This specimen, when picked up after shooting, dripped a clear fluid from the bill, almost certainly nectar.

*Breeding:* The holotype collected on 27th August is in full breeding plumage and a second adult male collected on the same date is in moult to breeding plumage. However, there is no data on the labels of these specimens to indicate gonad condition. Two of the adult males collected by Mr. Smart on Mt. Nyiro on 11th October are in full eclipse plumage with small testes, but his third male, collected on the same date, is completing moult into breeding plumage and had testes 5 mm. long. The adult female collected by Mr. Smart in October and the female I collected on 25th June were not in breeding condition. From this inadequate data it seems likely that *N.r.lathburyi* has an extended breeding season with a possible peak period between February and April.

#### *The races of Nectarinia reichenowi*

In the course of the present study material of *Nectarinia reichenowi* from throughout its known range was assembled, which has enabled me to revise the status of the two previously described races of this sunbird.

*Nectarinia reichenowi alinderi* (Laubmann), *Anz.Orn.Ges.Bay.* i, no. 12, p. 127, 1928: Mt. Elgon. Through the kindness of Mr. John Fowler I have received topotypical specimens of this race. I find that these agree exactly in measurements, bill formation and colour with a topotypical series of the nominate race. I agree with Granvik's and Prigogine's findings that this race was founded on an immature or subadult bird. *N.r.alinderi* (Laubmann is therefore a synonym of *N.r.reichenowi* (Fischer).

*Nectarinia reichenowi shellyae* Prigogine, *Rev.Zool.Bot.Africaines*, vol. 46, p. 414, 1952: Lake Lungwe, highlands north-west of Lake Tanganyika, Belgian Congo. Dr. A. Prigogine has very kindly sent me specimens of this race. I find *N.r.shellyae* to be a well-defined race, characterised in both sexes by its less curved bill (fig. 1) and in the female by the contrast between the grey crown and nape and the dark olive mantle.

*Nectarinia reichenowi* is therefore separable into three well-marked geographical races (table 1):

*N.r.reichenowi* (Fischer), a large race with a strongly curved bill; crown colour in female not contrasting with colour of mantle. Range: Highlands of Kenya Colony (except Northern Frontier Province) west to Mt. Elgon

on Kenya/Uganda border, south to highlands of northern Tanganyika.

*N.r.shellyae* Prigogine, a large race with a moderately curved bill; crown colour in female contrasting with colour of mantle. Range: Confined to mountains north-west of Lake Tanganyika, Belgian Congo, at altitudes over 7,000 feet.

*N.r.lathburyi*, a small race with a shorter, very strongly curved bill; crown colour in female not contrasting with colour of mantle. Range: Confined to the Mathews Range and Mt. Nyiro in the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya Colony.

#### Acknowledgements

Without the kind assistance of many friends this paper would not have been written. I am especially indebted to Dr. A. Prigogine for his kindness in sending me specimens of *N.r.shellyae* from the Belgian Congo; Mr. John Fowler has taken great trouble to collect specimens for me on Mt. Elgon; Mr. and Mrs. John Start of Molo have sent me valuable specimens from the western Kenya Highlands; Mr. John Smart has collected examples of *N.r.lathburyi* on Mt. Nyiro, without which it would not have been possible to describe the new race; Dr. H. Friedmann has sent me on loan the Mt. Uruguess specimens in the United States National Museum; my entomological colleague, Mr. R. Carcasson, has taken great trouble in identifying the contents of several stomachs; Colonel M. Cowie, Director of Royal National Parks of Kenya, and his staff, especially Mr. G. Dalton and Mr. T. Adamson, have given me much encouragement and assistance in the field.

TABLE I  
Measurements of adult *Nectarinia reichenowi* in millimetres

Race	Dimension	Sex	Number of specimens	Range	Mean: to nearest $\frac{1}{2}$ mm
<i>N.r.reichenowi</i>	wing	♂♂	40	79-86	82
		♀♀	15	68-73	70.5
	exposed	♂♂	40	26-31	29
	culmen	♀♀	15	25-28	27.5
	tail	♂♂	40	61-72	65
		♀♀	15	50-57	53
	central rectrices	♂♂	40	118-144	130
		♀♀			
<i>N.r.shellyae</i>	wing	♂♂	3	78-83.5	80
		♀♀	2	70	70
	exposed	♂♂	3	30-32	31
	culmen	♀♀	2	28	28
	tail	♂♂	3	67-69.5	68.5
		♀♀	2	58-60	59
	central rectrices	♂♂	3	119-127	124
		♀♀			
<i>N.r.lathburyi</i>	wing	♂♂	5	75-80	77
		♀♀	3	67-68	67.5
	exposed	♂♂	5	25-26.5	25.5
	culmen	♀♀	3	22.5-24	23
	tail	♂♂	5	58-61	60
		♀♀	3	50-52	51
	central rectrices	♂♂	5	106-124	114
		♀♀			